

# German Protestants in the Moslavina and Bilogora Regions - Part I: Ethnic-Confessional Background and Settling in the Area

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## Abstract

*The article researches the migrations of German Protestants in the area of Moslavina and Bilogora after the issuing of the Protestant Patent and religious liberalization in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. First, we research the regional background of the settlers (colonists), and we go on to follow the development of their church communities and parishes. After this, we describe the specific settlements with an absolute or relative German Protestant majority, as well as the historical circumstances of their church organization. Finally, we use sources, literature, and oral history (i.e., interviews) as we research the processes of migration and evacuation of German settlers and Protestants from those parts, as well as the destinies of their pastors and preachers during and after WWII.*

*Due to the scope of the research, the article was divided into two parts. In part 1, the emphasis is on migrations, the settlers' confessional background, and the founding of the first two large parishes in the region, and after that, we describe other parishes and their branches, their development, and stages of abandonment, as well as the description of their final spiritual workers' activities.*

**Keywords:** Germans, Moslavina, Bilogora, the Ilova river valley, Protestants, settling

## Introduction

Historical development of Protestantism in Croatian regions has been extensively tied to the migrations and settling of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, particularly the second half of it. Only small enclaves of Protestantism have remained in Eastern Slavonia and Baranja from the Reformation times, primarily because they had been out of the Habsburg government's reach, as well as that of the Croatian Ban<sup>1</sup> and the Parliament. These were primarily the Reformed (Calvinist) parishes of Korod, Retfala, Hrastin Laslovo with a Hungarian population (Njari 2018, 56–106), and the only remaining Croatian Reformed parish in the place of Tordinici, which retained its continuity as a branch of the Korod parish.<sup>2</sup>

By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, three more Pietist-Lutheran churches were started in the regions of Vojna Krajina (Military Frontier): Stara Pazova (1770), which was founded by Slovaks who migrated from Bačka; Nova Pazova (1790), founded by immigrating German Lutherans from the regions of Württemberg; and Elsass (Hudjetz-Loeber 1984, 14–9). Additionally, a group of German Lutheran-Pietist families settled near Vinkovci in 1819, hailing from Württemberg through Bačka, and they founded their settlement of, Neudorf, or: Vinkovačko Novo Selo (Wild 1980, 32). All these parishes have been reluctantly tolerated by the government, and for a long time, their church development has been disputed and hindered by the Roman Catholic Clergy.<sup>3</sup>

Starting from the year 1859/60, liberalization in the area of religious freedom took place in Croatia through the issuing of the Imperial “Protestant Patent.” This was a signal for other Protestants from other regions of the Habsburg monarchy to begin settling in the Croatian-Slavonian region, which was in urgent need of able and qualified workers, as well as investments at the height of industrialization.

These were primarily Protestants from two large denominations: the Augsburg denomination, i.e., Protestants whose church organizations' names such as,

- 1 Ban was the Governor, or the Viceroy in the Croatian Lands.
- 2 More in, Milić, Jasmin. 2014. *Povijest reformirane crkve u Hrvatskoj s posebnim osvrtom na reformiranu župu Tordinici 1823.-1952*; and Sterlemann, Karl. 1988. *Studien zur Kirchengeschichte der Reformierten Christlichen Kirche in Jugoslawien, Kroatien und Südungarn (von der Ansiedlung bis 1944)*.
- 3 The Croatian Parliament forbade Protestants from settling in the regions of Dalmatia, Croatia, and Slavonija through intervening into the Hungarian Stipulation No. XXVI, paragraph No. 14, which stated the following, “In the regions of Dalmatia, Croatia, and Slavonija the Protestants are forbidden from owning lands or realty, and from acquiring jobs. The only exception to this are the Lutherans in the region of Lower Slavonija, who are not to be tampered with.” (Oberkersch 1989, 140).

“Evangelička Crkva” (Evangelical/Lutheran Church) also had the suffix, AV or, AB in German; and then the Reformed Protestant churches (Calvinists), who had the suffix, HV or, HB with their names in German, which stands for the Helvetic creed.<sup>4</sup> There were also the so-called Unified Church Assemblies, which united both denominations under the umbrella of the parish, as was the case with the Protestant church in Zagreb (Rajković s.a.). In time, other groups of Protestants also began coming to Croatia from the circles of so-called “free churches”, which were independent from world authorities as it was in German lands; and they were the forerunners of of Evangelical churches in Croatia today.

It is important to note that both denominations in Croatia; both AV and HV have accepted the Hungarian Presbyterian-Synodal church organization which determined that, a) the local church congregation was the body of authority in Church by way of each parish electing their vicar who would only be nominated and affirmed by the local church community; b) there was parity in church hierarchy between the bearers of spiritual and secular power in the church (the clergy and the laypeople), according to which for each person in spiritual ministry there would be a counterpart from the “secular” world to hold the position. According to this, the vicars had power in spiritual and pastoral matters, but the decisions regarding the other important issues were made by the local parish. This fact provided local churches with a high level of autonomy and self-awareness (Herzog 1933, 11–3). We should also note the importance of the Chrischona mission organization from Basel, Switzerland, in church planting and building schools which, in the absence of spiritual workers, sometimes sent equipped missionaries, preachers, and teachers sometimes called, Levites, into isolated settlements<sup>5</sup> (Barwich 1985, 87–9).

The increase in the number of Protestant in Croatia was so strong, that their number has doubled in forty years, as can be seen in the table (Dobrovšak 2014, 70–6):

<b>Denominations</b>	<b>1869</b>	<b>1880</b>	<b>1900</b>	<b>1910</b>
<b>AV (Lutherans)</b>	0,71%	0,80%	1, 24 %	1,3%
<b>HV (Calvinists)</b>	0,38%	0,44%	0,54%	0,7%

4 For differences in denominations, see: Jambrek 2007, 33–4 and 197–98.

5 See more in: Barwich, Leopold. 1998. “Die Missionsarbeit der Chrischona-Brüder in Kroatien (Slawonien/Syrmien) im 19. Jahrhundert.” In: *Geschichte, Gegenwart und Kultur der Donauschwaben*. Heft 8. Sindelfingen.

## 1. Sub-Divisions of Protestant churches in Croatia - Slavonia

As per traditions and ethnicities, there were several types of Protestant churches in Croatia:

- Reformed Hungarian-speaking Reformed churches
- Reformed German-speaking Reformed churches
- The Croatian-speaking Reformed parish of Tordinci
- Lutheran Slovak-speaking churches
- Lutheran German-speaking churches
- Ethnically mixed Protestant churches (German, Hungarian, and Slovak)
- The Protestant Czech Brethren Church
- The Unified Lutheran and Reformed Parish

In this paper, we are focusing on the largest group, the German Protestants who were primarily Lutherans, but we will also be mentioning other movements and confessions. According to tradition and history of settling, they can be divided in the following way:

1. Parishes that were founded prior to the Protestant Patent from 1859: Nova Pazova with a branch in Novi Banovci, and Neudorf, i.e., Vinkovačko Novo Selo.
2. Double confessional settlements with migrants from the Bačka region after 1859: Velimirovac, Šidski Banovci.
3. Parishes in Moslavina and Bilogora, which were the result of migrations from Southern Hungary (the so called Hessen villages): Hrastovac Pakrački Antunovac, Bršljanica, Mlinska.
4. Churches in urban areas: Osijek and Zagreb (as a unified assembly).
5. Sister-branches which were the result of colonizing existing Protestant communities: Brezik, Ciganka, Sopjanska Ada, and Darkovac.
6. Churches established as the result of colonization after the occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1878.

In this research, we will be focusing on the group from the third point: on parishes and their branches in the Moslavina and Bilogora regions, i.e., the so-called valley of the Ilova river, which had a particular feature in settling, unlike others, and they differed from one another in the way they divided their church organization, and in two processes tied to World War II at the end of their departure from Croatia: relocation (1942) and evacuation in 1944.

Sources and literature regarding this particular historical topic and area are very rare. Birth records for many who have immigrated have not been preserved and literature has been reduced to local homeland book collections and family memories lacking historiographical systematization. The author had to use rare archival materials and secondary literature, as well as contacting and interview-

ing the still living eyewitnesses and participants from the final years of the church congregations' and assemblies' activities, and in their departure from the region, we are researching. Due to its scope, the research will be divided into two sections.

## **2. The Background History of Settling: Primary Migrations from Hessen into Southern Hungary During the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> Centuries**

In literature the terms, "Danube Swabian" or "Swabian Turkey" were used to describe and include all Germans who were living in the middle Danube area. This does not mean that all Germans who have reached the middle Danube area between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries were descended from the German province of Swabia, which occupies a large part of Württemberg and southwest Bavaria. In this area were administrative centers that were important for the diaspora and immigrants, who would then be sent further down the river, towards the lower course of the Danube.<sup>6</sup> Historians like Franz Wilhelm and Josef Kallbrunner (1936, 418–22) published the statistics regarding the emigrations of Germans into middle and lower Danube, which show that only 6% of immigrants migrated from Württemberg and Swabia between 1758 and 1785.<sup>7</sup> Based on this we can see how when using the accepted general terms of "Donauschwaben" or "Danube Swabs" in referring to Germans in Croatia, Vojvodina, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, we should also consider the regional background, which needs to be particularly researched and emphasized in modern historiography. The thesis regarding a kind of post-war return of the "Donauschwaben" into the land of their ancestors has been questioned through this fact, which shall be emphasized in the following examples and the research.

According to the statistics mentioned, the immigrants who were coming from other German provinces, like the area of the modern-day Hessen, made up about 4.4% of immigrants (Nassau 2.8%, and Hessen 1.6%), and on top of that they spoke in a different dialect, they had different customs and rituals and belonged to a different church creed compared to other expatriates. After the Reformation in 1567, Principality of Hessen (Landgrafschaft Hessen) became Protestant, but was a confessionally divided region: Hessen-Darmstadt became Lutheran, while Hessen-Kassel became Reformed.

6 Cities like Ulm or Regensburg were the official starting points for migrations.

7 The statistical table shows the provenance of German colonists from German countries between 1758 and 1785: Lorena (today, Lorraine in France; in German: Lothringen) 18.5%, Falačka 13.7%, Trier 8.0%, Luxembourg 5.8%, Elzas (today, the French province of Elsass) 4.9%, Mainz 4.6%, Württemberg 3.0%, Swabia 2.9%, Nassau 2.8%, Westfalia 2.3%, Austria 2.2%, Further Austria 1.8%, Hessen 1.6%, Zweibrücken 1.5%, military staff 1.6%, German Empire 5.9%.

During the Thirty-Year War (1618-1648) these territories have been devastated, and due to poverty, damage caused by warfare, as well as to tax increases and debts the residents sought a solution in emigrating (Schmidt 1939, 12). At the same time, during the liberation of southern Hungarian regions from the Turkish domination, the Habsburgs came into possession of a large portion of the land that was depopulated. The Habsburg King Charles III, who was also the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire just as Charles VI, wanted to quickly populate this region. In his efforts to populate the region as fast as possible, and due to the current danger of a possible repeated invasion by the Ottoman armies into these regions, the Emperor and King did not follow the strict Habsburg-Catholic policy which was accepted after the Reformation times. Due to prioritizing defense and populating newly conquered regions, the ruler decided to follow the policy of pragmatism, whereby the border regions would be populated with loyal settlers regardless of their Christian confessional background.

Led by such a political assessment, Emperor Charles VI wrote several letters to German princes, including the great Duke of Hessen, Ernst Ludwig. Through intensive correspondence, the emperor asked the Duke for subjects who would be willing to settle in the regions of Banat and Tokaj. In agreement with the imperial court, on October 14<sup>th</sup> 1722 Duke Ernst Ludwig of Hessen-Darmstadt issued an edict of emigration, which allowed the first 100 families to emigrate towards Southern Hungary (Schmidt 1939, 20–5). Reception centers were opened in the provincial cities of Würzburg and Darmstadt for this purpose, which was supposed to be the start of the emigration towards the southeastern part of the Monarchy.

The population of this “Carolingian emigration” was primarily coming from the areas surrounding the cities of Darmstadt, Seligenstadt, and Hanau, and they were mostly peasants; and just like the emigrants from the other parts of German regions they followed the lower course of the Danube, all the way to Banat. Thus, a large number of emigrants from the Hessen Protestant denomination ended up in the southern Hungarian regions of Tolna and Somogy. Over time, this entire region has been called “Swabian Turkey” because of German settlers (Weidlein 1967, 120–26), even though a large number of new settlers originated from the region of Hessen. These settlers have managed to maintain their distinctive Rhenish-Franconian dialect (Lendl 1941, 34) and to keep their customs and their dress (Bentz 1984, 51–9). Their Protestant, predominately Lutheran confession was marked by strong Pietist characteristics,<sup>8</sup> which had become an undesirable element under the absolutist rule of Duke Ernst Ludwig of Hessen – so we

8 Pietism is a renewal movement in Protestantism in 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, with the emphasis on the Christians’ personal devotion. See: Jambrek 2007, 287–88.

can conclude that, apart from poverty, many emigrants were also motivated by religious reasons to migrate from Hessen (Ackva and Van den Berg 1995, 203).

And yet, once they reached the southern Hungarian regions, the religious rights of Protestants have not been resolved - on the contrary, they were met with several new limitations through the royal edict of "Resolutio Carolina" from 1731. However, the Protestant settlers from Hessen received protection from the local noble family of Mercy, who have helped them to overcome the obstacles which went on to endanger them even into the reign of the new Habsburg ruler, Maria Theresa. Protestants were able to build their settlements on their lands in the so-called Comitatus (region) of Tolna, as well as prayer houses<sup>9</sup> and they were allowed to organize their church structures and schools. So even before the beginning of religious tolerance in the Empire, which was issued in 1781 by Joseph II, there were already functional German Protestant settlements here, such as Majos, Schar-St.-Lorenz, Kölesd, Abtsdorf, Kalaznó, Hutsching, Varsád, Gyöngyös or Bikal (Heppenheimer 1990, 69–70).

By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, many illegal immigrants were flooding into these places as well, led mostly by unmarried migrants who wanted to avoid the draft for the Napoleonic wars (Bentz 1984, 61). The religious situation in the Hungarian parts of the Carpathians was very heterogeneous at the time: 60% of the population were Roman Catholics, 15% were Reformed Protestants (Calvinists), 13% were Eastern Orthodox, 2% were Jews, and 9% were Lutherans (Protestants of the Augsburg confession) (Fabiny 1997, 24). Protestants-Lutherans have formed their church structure partially with Slovaks from the north of the country, some with Hungarians, and largely with German settlers in the areas of Tolna and Somogy (Czenthe 2013). The German parishes from the south have, according to the administrative rulebook, been assigned to the Montan district of the Hungarian Lutheran Church AV, which went on to include a large number of Lutheran congregations in Croatia and Slavonia (Wild 1980, 58–9).

As holders of political power, the Hungarian nobility included a large percentage of Protestants, mostly Reformed but there were also some Lutherans who have materially supported and encouraged the work of German Lutheran parishes, such as Duchess Maria Dorothea, who had the background from Württemberg, and after marrying palatine Joseph of Habsburg in 1819 she started living in Buda (Kühbauch 1978, 6–9). After the onset of the Hungarian revolution in 1848-1849, many Lutheran vicars, along with the intellectuals of the bourgeoisie, supported the Hungarian nobility in their liberal and national efforts. That is why the Lutheran Bishop of West Hungary, Máté Hubner, wrote the following message of support in his Advent epistle from 1848: "Our great Master has given us

9 Prayer House was a tolerated name for the assemblies instead of a church.

the obligation to fight for the sacred truth against the shameful enmity and lies... Behold, armed conflict is raging and looming over the heads of twelve million people. Will they still be considered as cattle, or shall they become free people?" (Fabiny 1997, 26).<sup>10</sup>

After the downfall of the revolution during the Habsburg absolutist reign, those clergy the priests have been distanced from political influence. After a few years, the authorities have loosened their control in the lands ruled by the Hungarian crown, which included confessional issues as well, and in 1859-1860 they have issued the Protestant Patent, which did not make Hungarian Protestants very happy because they felt that it had interfered with their church autonomy (Pindor 1902, 78; Fabiny 1997, 26). Hungary had tolerated Protestantism even before the Austrian-Hungarian Compromise from 1867 but had only gained full self-governance concerning religious matters after the Compromise. This had become a challenge for German Protestants, primarily because their use of German language in liturgy and church rule was put into question due to the increase in the Hungarian nationalistic tendencies (Hungarization/Magyarisation). On top of that, their settlements in the south of Hungary began experiencing economic problems as well, which were tied to overpopulation and lack of farmland.

By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, new migrations started from these settlements, which have also been called, "the Hessen villages." The first wave started moving towards the neighboring provinces of Banat and Bačka, into cities such as Timisoara, or the existing settlements with a Protestant majority, such as Novi Sivec and Novi Vrbas. After this, in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there came massive new waves of immigration, primarily into overseas countries (USA, Canada, and South America), then into the German cities in the German Reich which were looking for work power as part of industrialization; and towards the south, to the former frontier provinces of Croatia, where freedom of religion spread after the issuing of the Protestant Patent. Finally, at the end of the century (after 1878) certain families left for the newly acquired Habsburg province of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It was still possible to buy affordable farmland in those two areas, and the German farmers-peasants from south Hungary were also invited and further stimulating and supported by regional landowners to come to work on their land (Oberkersch 1989, 22–39). In this way, the number of German Prot-

10 „Unser großer Meister hat es uns als Verpflichtung auferlegt (...) dass wir die heilige Sache der Wahrheit gegen die spottende Feindschaft der Lüge beschützen (...). Seht der bewaffnete Kampf tobt über zwölf Millionen Menschen, ob sie auch weiter als Viehe betrachtet werden oder dass sie freie Menschen werden?“ Because of this kind of support, Haubner had to be temporarily suspended from serving.



estants of both confessions migrating to Croatia and Slavonia between 1860 and 1900 has tripled.<sup>11</sup>

### 3. Moslavina and Bilogora - a Historically Divided Border Region

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, some hundred kilometers southeast from Zagreb, the capital of Croatia, near the rivers Sava and Lonja, and eastward from the river Ilova, between the mountains Bilogora and Papuk, was a large, neglected, wood-covered geographical area. This valley, known as the Ilova river valley, was sparsely populated during the Turkish wars. Although we can geographically speak about one territory and area, between 16<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries this region has historically belonged to different authorities and administrations. Moving on towards Križevci, from Gradiška, and towards Bjelovar, there was a *cordon-sanitaire* which was under the jurisdiction of the Military Frontier's administration, which spread on from the Sava river and near Ottoman Bosnia and Herzegovina in the south, and it divided civil Croatia from civil Slavonia, and it ended 20 kilometers east from a place called, Gaj. The area surrounding the city of Garešnica belonged to the Križevci regiment, thus integrating the region into the Slavonian Military Frontier with the capital in Bjelovar. On the other side was the city of Kutina in the southwest, which belonged to the rule of the Croatian Ban (Božičević 2010, 16–7). This kind of division caused many settlements and villages in the Ilova valley to belong to different legal and administrative authorities, which was particularly evident in their traditions and their economic power. After the Hungarian-Croatian Compromise from 1868, and particularly after the abolition of the military borders, this area was administratively divided into three counties within the Croatian-Slavonian Kingdom: the Zagrebačka county, the Bjelovarsko-Križevačka county, and the Požeška county (Vrbošić 1992 59–62).<sup>12</sup>

During the time after issuing the "Protestant Patent," another administrative-geographical division emerged, which was evident in the unusual county-wise distribution of Protestant churches that we are researching here. This division caused the usually closely situated settlements to be divided into four distinct and autonomous distant parishes: the largest purely Lutheran settlement of Hrastovac has, together with its branch of Mlinska, become a single parish; Pakrački Antunovac and the belonging branches in Kutina, Kapetanovo Polje, and Strižićevac

11 From 20 000 to 67 000. More in: Grumbach 1975, 14.

12 The administrative division of this region is still present today, because the region is a geographically integrated of the Ilova river that's been divided between three counties in modern-day Croatia, which intersect settlements that had previously been inhabited by German settlers: Bjelovarsko-bilogorska county, Sisačko-moslavačka county, and the Požeško-slavonska county. See: maps of Croatia: <https://karta-hrvatske.com.hr/karta-zupanija>.

comprised the second one; Mali Bastaji originally belonged to Hrastovac, but it and its branch of Veliki Miletinac also became autonomous over time; and the relatively distant parish of Zagreb (80 km) seized the branches in Bršljanica and Selište (Wild 1980, 104–07).<sup>13</sup>

The farmlands in this region belonged mostly to the noble family, Janković, whose Earl was Julije Janković. In 1861, he sold 49,000 acres of his property around Lipik and Prekopakra to merchants, De Neureux and Henry from Marseille, and Ciotti from Trieste, for around 925,000 forints (Oberkersch 1989, 21; Njegovan-Stárek 2008, 15). The merchants publicly advertised this parceled-out land and forests, and they sold it to the new settlers who were interested (Heppenheimer 1990, 90; Pindor 1902, 86). Before new migrations in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, besides the Roman Catholic Croats were also settled Eastern Orthodox Serbs escaping in 18<sup>th</sup> century Serbia under Ottoman rule. As farmers who also provided men for military ranks, they garnered certain privileges and church autonomy, which were provided to them by the government in Vienna. The peculiarity of the local population before the arrival of newcomers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was the fact that the people in these settlements lived in particular farming and family communities, so-called collectives or “zadruga.” The collectives were a patriarchal form of a community of large families which were governed by an elected elder. Each collective formed a separate economic unit that was able to provide and care for each member of the community. Adult men would stand guard or go to war several times a year, thus serving their military service. In case of an individual's death, his family would be materially secured through the collective, along with all the rights and obligations. A single town would have several of these collectives-communities, which have survived and retained their customs even after World War I (Bentz 1984, 28).

#### 4. Colonization During the 19<sup>th</sup> Century

The first colonists who arrived here in 1825/26 were Czech Catholics. They settled in the towns of Ivanovo Selo or, Janova Ves, and went on to Veliki Zdenci. They were then followed by Slovaks, along with new groups of Czechs who settled in the city of Daruvar and the surrounding area (Matušek 1996, 15–20). Following them were Hungarians from southern Hungary, and Italians from the region of Friuli, which was under Habsburg rule at the time, and they settled around the towns of Lipik and Pakrac. At the same time, Ukrainians were coming from

13 The place, Selište, had its name changed several time: it had been named, Srpsko Selište, due to the Serbian majority, while during the NDH it was renamed into, Moslavačko Selište, while today it's just, Selište near Kutina.

Galicia and settling in the area around Lipovljani, and in religious terms, they belonged to the Greek-Catholic Church. Migrations of Ashkenazi Jews, mostly from Germany and parts of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, began during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, at the time of liberalizing religious laws, and after the arrival of Protestants.

Germans were migrating and establishing their presence in this region even before the establishment of the Military Frontier when numerous German officers and parts of military administration and personnel arrived in the cities of Bjelovar and Daruvar. They were then followed into the cities by German entrepreneurs who formed the civilian level of the administratively divided Croatia at the time (Bentz 1984, 44). The greatest group was comprised of German farmers who, as part of the second wave of migrations, arrived from already existing settlements in south Hungary. They were finally followed by Germans from Bohemia and Gradišće / Burgenland, who came over on their private initiative and without “governmental incentives” (Lendl 1941, 19). The phase of German immigration from south Hungary, immediately before the abolition of military borders, happened in several waves between 1865-1914 (Lendl 1941, 20). It was this phase that gathered united German settlers from two different Christian denominations: Catholic and Protestant, the latter one being part of this research.

## 5. The First German Protestants in the Ilova Valley

The history of Protestants migrating to the Ilova valley and establishing their churches and religious life in Bilogora and Moslavina has been insufficiently researched in terms of historiography. Pindor, the vicar of Osijek, first mentioned it in his book from 1902, which was then referenced several times by the following church historian and chroniclers of German Protestantism in Croatia and Yugoslavia: Georg Wild, Karl Sterlemann, and the Finnish-Croatian vicar, Mati Korpiaho. Three purely German and Protestant settlements (Mali Bastaji, Mlin-ska, and Hrastovac) possessed their local book collections in German, as well as several examples of so-called “gray literature” which refers to family books and memoirs published as independent publications.<sup>14</sup> Apart from this, there is a well-equipped Internet site in English which is hosted in Canada, and which,

14 Self-published family books that have been gathered so far: Bialleck, Anna. *Entwicklung der Schule und Kirche in Eichendorf (Hrastovac) und weiteren Gemeinden in Slawonien*. (lacking place and date of publishing); Faust, Johann: *Die Heimat vergißt man nicht. Ein Hrastovacer erinnert sich* (lacking place and date); Kehl, Konrad. 1964. *Lebenserinnerungen des Konrad Kehl* (lacking place of publishing); Englert Erwin, Weber Jakob, Jung Philipp. 2014. *Hrastovac, Eichendorf-Eine deutsche Siedlung in Slavonien. Erinnerungen an die Jahre 1865-1946*. München.

aside from the history of Hrastovac, also brings accounts regarding neighboring Protestant settlements, such as Velika Mlinska, Mali Bastaji, Kapetanovo Polje, and Bršljanica, all of which belonged to different central parishes (Zagreb, Hrastovac, Antunovac).<sup>15</sup>

At a micro-level, the general religious history of the region was also recorded in the local scientific magazine, *Zbornik Povijesnog društva Pakrac-Lipik*, and one of its issues was dedicated to religious communities in the area of Lipik-Pakrac-Daruvar, including Protestant church from the region (Benković 2012/2013). There were also some additional sources about the immigration of German Protestants, but only in broadest of terms, and in monographs about Czechs in Croatia, as well as in local book collections in the town of Dežanovac and the surrounding villages.<sup>16</sup> Also important are the archival sources and church registers: primarily those from the Hrastovac parish and its branches, which are located in the Garešnica Registry Office.

Apart from German Protestants, this area was also inhabited by Slovak Lutherans, Reformed Hungarians and Czechs who, being Reformed, joined the ethnically mixed church in Daruvar, and then an Protestant parish is founded in the ethnically mixed town of Uljanik near Hrastovac in 1892, where the Czech Protestants could connect with the old Hussite movement of, *Českobratrská církev evangelická* (Matušek 1996, 137–39).

The most complete publication about the migrations and live of German Protestants in this area up till now is a detailed monograph from 1941 called, “Das Deutschtum in der Ilowasenke” by Egon Lendl (1941), as part of a series of publications about Germans in Croatia from the late 1930s to early 1940s. The Germans who were coming from Protestant settlements in the Hungarian part of “Swabian Turkey” (Somogy, Tolna county, and Baranja) were largely from poorer families, and by settling in the Ilova valley they were attempting to secure a new and better life for themselves and their families. It was not an easy start upon arrival, because it was necessary to clear out the dense forest to make room for building the settlements and for farmlands (Oberkersch 1989, 18–20). An added difficulty for Protestants was the fact that there was no church organization tradition and a network which would support their religious life, as well as the related cultural and social lives, as opposed to, e.g., other settlers or their “Protestant brethren” which also had found very functional church organization and structure in Bačka (Fata 2017, 142–58).

15 See: <https://hrastovac.net/neighbouring-villages/>.

16 Blaha, Karlo. 2009. *Dežanovac, doprinos poznavanju prošlosti naselja*. Daruvar: Logos; Dežanovac: Općina Dežanovac - KUD Hrvatska gruda Dežanovac. Blaha, Karlo. 2009. *Naselja oko Dežanovca*. Daruvar: Logos. Njegovan-Starek, Siniša. 2008. *Česi u Pakracu Prekopakri i Lipiku*. Pakrac: Povijesno društvo Pakrac - Lipik; Daruvar: Logos.

During the first few years of settling after the introduction of the Protestant Patent, Croatia, Slavonia, and its Military Frontier were not considered to be an area of importance for missionary work by the central Hungarian Lutheran Church, which is why there were no significant investments into ministers and infrastructure. Pindor emphasizes that in 1865 there were first contacts with the church through a missionary priest, Lorenz Schreiner, who went on to inform the center in Budapest about the newly settled Protestants in the Ilova valley. In 1866 the Senior of the Somogy District, Johann Andorka, traveled to Antunovac and started a modest religious work in the parish. He would visit this ethnically mixed Protestant community near Pakrac several times a year. It was only in 1870 when a school was built and the arrival of the first vicar, Michael Kohut, that the functional life of the parish was able to begin (Pindor 1902, 88). In his local book, Philipp Jung, the local historian for Hrastovac, summarizes the relationship between the Budapest headquarter and the Protestants in the Ilova valley: "Croatia-Slavonija was considered a secondary diocese territory by the Hungarian Lutheran Church, but still good enough for sending insubordinate vicars and ministers. If they weren't able to handle you as a vicar, you'd be sent off to Slavonija" (Englert, Weber and Jung 2014, 55).<sup>17</sup> This meant that, when the new settlers required spiritual support, they were supposed to take initiative and seek ministers in other places. During the first few years, some support came from the manager of Pakrac properties, Ludwig Stein, who was himself a Protestant in the service of the landowner, Count Janković (Oberkersch 1989, 21; Lendl 1941, 24).

It was only a few years later that the missionary work of the Basel mission of St. Chrischona began in the region, uniting Protestants from both denominations. Thanks to this mission, several documents cover the work in Protestant churches and schools, as well as the settlements in this area. When it came to receiving and sending missionaries toward the Ilova valley, the main mission station was in the capital of Zagreb, which was itself going through a long phase of formation and consolidation (1855-1877) (Pindor 1902, 79–81). Also, the settlers first took a few years to cultivate their dwellings for normal religious life (Lendl 1941, 24).<sup>18</sup>

When the building of the settlement was finished in 1866/67, it marked the beginning of modest church work with the support of the Basel Mission, and later also the Somogy District, followed by further financial help from the Ger-

17 "Kroatien-Slawonien war damals von der ungarischen Kirche als lästiges Nebenland angesehen und deshalb gut genug war, unerwünschte Pfarrer abzuschieben oder kaltzustellen [...] Wer sich als Pfarrer unmöglich gemacht hatte, wurde nach Slavonien abgeschoben."

18 Also, an interview with the pastor of the *Evangelical Pentecostal Church* in Garešnica, Branko Banić, who is originally from Hrastovac: "When Germans arrived in this region, a fire burned for weeks, started with the wood they were clearing out and using to build their settlement and the streets" (Hrastovac, May 22<sup>nd</sup> 2020).

man association of Gustav-Adolf from Leipzig (Pindor 1902, 87–9).<sup>19</sup> From that time on, the settling of Germans, and with them a large number of Protestants in the Ilova valley, went on in several stages:

1. Stage 1 - between 1865-1867, marking the emergence of the settlements, Hrastovac, Pakrački Antunovac, as well as mostly Roman Catholic settlements such as Blagorodovac, Sokolovac, and Dobrovac.
2. Stage 2 - the year 1878, when smaller groups of Germans arrived into existing German settlements.
3. Stage 3 - between 1882-1886, marking the emergence or migration into smaller settlements: Velika Mlinska, Kapetanovo Polje, Stržičevac (Franjevac), Veliki and Mali Banovac, Khuenovo Selo (Ploštine), etc.
4. Stage 4 - beginning from the end of the 1880s until 1905, when Germans, mostly from southern Hungary, continue to migrate into already existing settlements (Benković 2012/2013, 33).

German settlers, who were mostly coming from southern Hungary, were eventually joined by Germans from Bohemia (Böhmen/Czech Forest). Settlement contracts with different regional landowners in western Slavonia have only received their official shape years after the settlement (Oberkersch 1989, 21). According to the 1931 census, there were eventually around 7006 German settlers in the region, some 3100 of which belonged to the Protestant churches, which is about 41% of the total number of Germans (Lendl 1941, 30–31; Bentz 1984, 46–7). We have already mentioned that, out of all the settlements, only Hrastovac, Mali Bastaji, and largely Velika Mlinska were almost completely homogeneously German Protestant settlements. All the other settlements were either ethnically or confessionally mixed, and a large number of German Protestants also settled in the settlements of Pakrački Antunovac, Velika, and Mala Bršljanica, Kapetanovo Polje, and Pašijan.

## **6. The Most Significant German Protestant Parishes and Branches in Moslavina and Bilogora**

### *6.1. Pakrački Antunovac*

Pakrački Antunovac was an ethnically and confessionally mixed village inhabited by Catholic Croats and Germans, and later on Protestant Hungarians, Slovaks, and German Lutherans, who have divided themselves after the first wave of the colonization into groups. Most of them left for Hrastovac, which had become a

<sup>19</sup> This organization exists to this day, continuing to support the work of Protestant churches in the diaspora.

completely German-Lutheran settlement; while those remaining either remained in Antunovac or moved to the neighboring villages of Sokolovac and Blagorodovac (Pindor 1902, 86–90). The first contact with the Church organization came about, as mentioned, through the work of missionary and priest, Lorenz Schreiner, and through the annual visits of Senior Johann Andorka from Somogyj (Pindor 1902, 86–8).<sup>20</sup> Until the arrival of the first priest, Kohut, in Antunovac, baptisms were performed by the Eastern Orthodox priest from the neighboring town of Uljanik. The first church building was built in 1887. Even though it is the oldest one if we go by the date of being built, it is barely even mentioned in the church history literature or Donau-Swabian literature, as opposed to the parish of Hrastovac, which managed to establish its position as the stronghold of the German Lutheran movement in the region (Wild 1980, 106). The archives from Antunovac parish have been destroyed, except registry books in Lipik and Požega (Benković 2012/2013, 33). At the turn of the century (in 1890) Pakrački Antunovac had around 543 Protestant believers, i.e., one-third of the total population and, apart from the church, it also owned a confessional school which, unlike with Hrastovac, became a state-run school with the Croatian language being the official language to be used during teaching (Benković 2012/2013, 34). The particular thing about this parish was that religious services were held in three languages: Hungarian, German, and Slovak, and unlike other Lutheran parishes the vicars were almost exclusively Hungarian, and during the 75 years from its beginning until 1945 these were:

1. Michael Kohut, 1870 – he left the parish in the same year. The position was vacant between 1870-1878, partly cared for by the traveling priest, Josef Tanacs.
2. 1878-1881, Georg Tomasovski, teacher and Levite (non-ordained minister).
3. 1881-1883, Stefan Bottyany.
4. Sándor (Alexander) Szerényi, between 1884-1888 (building the church) and later on between 1896-1924.
5. Gjula (Julius) Wengh, 1888-1895, served in-between two Szereny's terms.
6. 1924-1945, Andreas (Andrasz) von Tarczay.

The school quickly fell under the rule of secular authorities, which meant that there was no need for cooperating with missionary organizations and German teachers (Levites), as was the case with other German-dominated parishes and branches in the Ilova valley. The Antunovac parish cared for believers in the larger area from Banova Jaruga, Blagorodovac, Sirač, Striževac, all the way

20 See: <https://hrastovac.net/village-information/hrastovac-lutheran-church/>.

to Slavonski Brod (Pindor 1902, 88). Upon changing religious laws in Croatia and Slavonia, Antunovac did not join the newly established Croatian District but was joined to the parishes in Hrastovac and Zagreb under the Somogy District (Oberkersch 1989, 142). After World War I and the establishment of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, Antunovac falls under and becomes part of the Upper Croatian District, whose senior from 1927 until restructuring the church in 1931/32 was vicar von Tarczay (Wild 1980, 136).

Since the Ilova valley always suffered from a lack of ministers, the ones from Antunovac had to fill in for the frequent vacancies in the branches such as Kapetanovo Polje and even in the “big” parishes. That way, in the time before World War II vicar Tarczay was in charge of pastoral care in Hrastovac, which has been without a pastor since the 1930s but only had a teacher for a long time.<sup>21</sup> However, Tarczay did not evacuate in October 1944 but remained in the country, which will be discussed in the remainder of this paper.

## 6.2. *The Hrastovac Parish*

Although Hrastovac was numerically the largest regional German Lutheran parish, for a long time - over half a century - the settlers were unable to build a church building with a steeple. They did, however, succeed at the very beginning, by the settling agreement, in building a school building, which was used for religious services on Sundays. The specific details regarding the beginning of independent church life differ in the records by Joseph Pindor (1902, 88) and Matti Korpiahou (1988, 86–7) from those by Rosina T. Schmidt, who does not mention the period before the arrival of the first priest in 1866.<sup>22</sup> After the school was built in 1868 (whose construction was financed by Gustav Adolf organization in Germany), the office of teachers was started and continued the workers from the mission of St. Chrischon from Basel, Peter Heidl (1870-1872), Friedrich Kuehnepfel (?-1874),<sup>23</sup> Keller the Levite (1874-75), and Johannes Haas (1875-1899). Apart from the teaching office, they also served as preachers on Sundays.

In 1886 the first ordained vicar arrives in town: Adam Peter, who was sent by the Hungarian Lutheran church from Tolna, south Hungary. Since that time, the teaching and pastoral offices became separate, and the responsibility for paying the teacher Haas, who was helping the pastor with visiting branches in the area, was taken by St. Chrischona's mission (Korpiahu 1988, 87). The school in Hrastovac has, from its beginning until the evacuation, been a denominational school

21 Archive of Registry Office in Garešnica: Book of the Baptized in the Hrastovac/Eichendorf parish 1903-1944.

22 See: <https://hrastovac.net/village-information/hrastovac-lutheran-church/>.

23 Kühnapfel died in Hrastovac in the same year his term began (Bialleck s.a., 4).



of Augsburg creed in German. Because of this, from the time of its establishment until the 1930s it never receives any support from either Croatian or Yugoslav authorities, which was causing financial difficulties for the work of teaching, as well as constructing a new school building. Upon the arrival of the priest Peter Haas, new branches are planted: Kapetanovo Polje, Bršljanica, and a branch in the neighboring village of Blagorodovac, which had some Protestant families living there.

There is no documentation regarding the question of whether there was a partnership with the neighboring Czech Reformed Church in the neighboring Uljanik that began in 1892, but it seems that this cooperation fell through, primarily due to the language barrier (Sterlemann 1988, 120–21). By the end of the century, as a regional spiritual center for Lutheran churches, Hrastovac has developed close cooperation with the parish church in Zagreb, which is confirmed by the participation of the parish representatives at the Croatian Protestant Church Synod in Zagreb between October 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> 1893. Hrastovac, as well as the congregation from Zagreb and four local churches from Srijem, took part in the Synod in a then unsuccessful attempt of forming a unified Croatian Protestant Church, which was supposed to include both Protestant denominations, AV and HV.<sup>24</sup> Representatives from the Zagreb and Hrastovac municipalities have then, as previously mentioned, joined the Somogy District along with Antunovac (Wild 1980, 58–9).

Until the World War I vicars would change frequently in Hrastovac; after vicar Adam came two vicars from then Hungarian region of Burgenland /Gradišće/ Felsőőrvidék. Between 1898-1904 the vicar was Theophil Bayer, who tried to introduce strong Hungarization into church life, which was met with strong opposition from the parish where, as prescribed by the Hungarian church order, laymen held great power (Englert, Weber, Jung 2014, 54). The school was even closed between 1898 and 1900 due to the lack of German teachers. The next vicar was a Hungarian, Bela Seregeli (1907-1910), and the teacher was Matija Wenzel, who also worked in Kapetanovo Polje.<sup>25</sup> As a result of Protestant mission work among Croats, there were already educated Croatian vicars, i.e., priests at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, some of whom have been appointed to Hrastovac. Between 1907-1910, the first appointed pastor of the community was vicar Dobrovoljac, a former ordained Roman Catholic vicar, who is then followed by former Franciscan priest Plivelić as vicar, who worked in Hrastovac until 1916. Another Croatian vicar, Ivan Zmajla, a student from St. Chrischona and vicar in

24 HB represents the Helvetic creed – i.e., that of the Reformed Church (Calvinists), while AB represents the Augsburg creed, i.e., Evangelical Lutherans.

25 Archives of the Garešnica Registry Office, Baptismal Records of the Municipality of Hrastovac / Eichendorf 1903-1944.

Zagreb, worked between 1898 and 1906 as pastor and teacher in the neighboring village of Bršljanica (Korpiaho 2018).

In 1916/1917 the vicar was Jakob Kettenbach, who had briefly arrived from Šidski Banovci. The Levites/teachers in his time were Ferdinand Dully in Kapetanovo Polje and Ervin Englert in Hrastovac.<sup>26</sup> Soon after this, Kettenbach was called into Vinkovačko Novo Selo (Neudorf), and his position was taken in 1917 by vicar Heinrich Zulauf / Zulany,<sup>27</sup> who managed municipal life for Germans in the uncertain times of changes in the country, up until 1922. However, he was forced to “go back to Hungary.”<sup>28</sup> Hrastovac already had a population of over 1,000 at this time, and the settlement had to pay for a vicar and even two teachers, but still did not have a bigger church building. By the end of 1922 and with the help of the Upper Croatian District, a fund-raising campaign was started for the construction of the new church (Sterlemann 1988, 124), which was finished in November 1929 because of the global economic crisis. During that time, the vicars were Erhard Torinus (Englert, Weber, Jung 2014, 56) and Hellmut May (from the pastoral family May from Celje).<sup>29</sup>

The church construction and its consecration have confirmed Hrastovac's status as the largest Protestant (Lutheran) municipality and a sort of stronghold center in the Ilova valley, Moslavina, and Bilogora. In time, the parish was joined with a purely German Lutheran branch from Velika Mlinska, which we will be discussing further on. However, despite the new building and a numerous believer base, in 1939 the parish lost its last vicar, Petrick, who had lost his work permit on April 23<sup>rd</sup> 1939 as a foreign citizen.<sup>30</sup> Pastoral work was then continued by the vicar from Antunovac, Tarczay, while the teacher Leinberger continued leading the school. Up until the evacuation they were the ones who were keeping registry books and leading church services.

26 Archives of the Registry Office in Garešnica, Baptismal Records of Hrastovac Eichendorf and its branches 1903-1944.

27 The homeland website mentions vicar Zulauf, while the baptismal registry book mentions Zulany. <https://hrastovac.net/village-information/hrastovac-lutheran-church/>, Registry Office in Garešnica - Taufbuch der Gemeinde Hrastovac Eichendorf 1903-1944.

28 He was married to teacher Neufeld in Hrastovac (Englert, Weber, Jung 2014, 55-6). See also: <https://hrastovac.net/village-information/hrastovac-lutheran-church/>.

29 Construction certificate: ceremonial laying down of the cornerstone for the Protestant Church in Hrastovac on May 26<sup>th</sup> 1929. Personal property of lady Anna Bialleck, Heinburg. Helmut's brother went on to become Austrian Bishop Gerhard May.

30 The protocol of the District convention from October 10<sup>th</sup> 1938 in Pakrački Antunovac. Copy from the private archives of the vicar of the Lutheran Church of Christ (Christus Kirche), Moran Rajković, in Zagreb. After 1939, due to vacancy he was no longer vicar in Hrastovac; instead, the priest Walter from Slatina performed confirmations and wedding ceremonies in Bastaji (Hoffmann 1990, 159, 163).

## Conclusion of Part 1

In part one we researched the background history of migrations and as the main topic the history itself, or the “secondary” wave of migrations into the regions of Moslavina and Bilogora by German Protestants in the period after the liberalization of religious laws in Croatia-Slavonia in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. We have followed the founding of settlements, church parishes in two large settlements of Antunovac and Hrastovac, and their development until the demise of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire. We also tried to place the events from the micro-level into a wider political and social context of Croatia at the time to get an insight into the development of events, as well as into the difficulties that the settlers were being met with during the first years of establishing church organization in the region, which will go on to prove to be a challenge in planting branches and new Protestant congregations, as we will be discussing in part 2.

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Vatroslav Župančić

### **Njemački evangelici u područjima Moslavine i Bilogore, I dio: Etno-konfesionalna pozadina i naseljavanje**

#### **Sažetak**

Članak istražuje naseljavanje njemačkih evangelika na područja Moslavine i Bilogore nakon donošenja Protestantskog patenta i konfesionalne liberalizacije u drugoj polovici 19. stoljeća. Isprva se istražuje regionalno porijeklo doseljenika (kolonista), a zatim se prati razvoj njihovih crkvenih zajednica i župa. Nakon toga, opisuju se konkretna naselja s njemačkom evangeličkom apsolutnom ili relativnom većinom te povijesne okolnosti u kojima se odvijalo njihovo crkveno organiziranje. Na kraju, kroz izvore, literaturu i govornu historiju (intervjue) istražuju se procesi preseljenja i evakuacije njemačkih naseljenika i evangelika sa ovih prostora te sudbine njihovih pastora i propovjednika tijekom i nakon Drugoga svjetskog rata.

Zbog opsega istraživanja, članak je podijeljen na dva dijela. U prvome je dijelu naglasak na naseljavanju, konfesionalnoj pozadini naseljenika te osnivanju dviju prvih velikih župa u ovome kraju, a nakon toga opisuju se ostale župe i filijale, njihov razvoj te etape odlaska, kao i opis djelovanja njihovih posljednjih duhovnih radnika.